

A PECULIAR MONSTER

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This Powerful and Savage Saurian, Sometimes Twenty-seven Feet in Length, Will Tackle Anything From a Sheep to a Half Ton Bullock.

The crocodile of the Nile differs very little from that of Australia, which is generally termed "alligator," though in reality a true crocodile. The head of a true alligator is broader and shorter than that of the crocodile. There is also considerable difference in the teeth and their disposition in the jaws. The teeth of an alligator are unequal, and the larger of the lower canine enters a cavity in the upper jaw, while that of a crocodile simply fits into a groove on the outside of the upper jaw, leaving

the tooth clearly visible when the mouth of the monster is closed. There are also differences in the webbing of the toes and the form of the legs, though to the general observer there is little or no difference.

The crocodiles no doubt feed largely upon fish, but as they grow older and stronger and require great quantities of food they will when hungry attack anything from a sheep or kangaroo to a bullock, a big crocodile making short work of a bullock weighing over half a ton. Some of these monsters measure as much as twenty-seven feet in length and possess immense strength besides wonderful cunning and patience. One will lie in wait at any watering place frequented by animals, hardly distinguishable from a log of wood, so still and impassive it has become. The animal coming down to drink is seized in the crocodile's huge jaws and drawn into the water and drowned.

At other times the tail is used to sweep the animal into deep water, where, even though its prey may be a heavy bullock, it has little or no chance against its enemy, which is specially provided by nature with an arrangement that prevents the water rushing

down its huge throat even though its jaws are fully distended through holding its prey. Thus after a few brief seconds the unequal struggle is over, and the saurian takes the carcass in tow to some favored locality where he can enjoy it at his leisure.

In the early days at Port Darwin, South Australia, bathing in the open sea was forbidden owing to the danger from crocodiles, there and nearly everywhere else in Australia called alligators, though in reality no true alligators exist in Australia. A young trooper named Davis, a fine swimmer, disregarded the general order and one morning early went for a swim. Far out in the harbor he noticed what he and others took to be a floating log. Many of the northern trees float and are washed down in the wet season to the open sea. Out went the strong swimmer, nearer and nearer to the supposed log, until too late he recognized his mistake and that he was approaching instead of a log a huge and apparently listless crocodile.

But the knowledge came too late to be of any service to poor Davis, though some men called out to him from a small craft close by to "Go back! Go back!" and Davis did make an attempt to retreat and was swimming manfully shoreward when the huge brute flashed down upon him at a terrible speed and, opening his great jaws to their utmost capacity, came down with a smack that was heard even to the shore, and inside their cruel grasp was Trooper Davis' head. Then, with the quickness common to the saurian, it had disappeared with its victim.

Crocodiles at nighttime low and below just like cattle, especially like bulls, and I have spent some nights in an open boat in Cambridge gulf, northwestern Australia, where the whole place seemed to be alive with them, and what with their splashes and cries, the weirdness of the whole scene and their close proximity as they at times rocked the boat sleep was impossible, for there are several instances on record where crocodiles have taken out of camps and boats.

A poor fellow named Reed, the mate or second mate of the Gullian, had gone in his vessel to some river in Carpentaria gulf—I believe the Roper. The vessel was at anchor near the mouth of the river. The mate, Reed, had been dispatched in charge of a watering party and was some distance up the river in a large open boat. Water had been obtained, and they were all ready for a return to the ship. All being made snug, the tired fellows turned in, having made their camp in the boat. The night was a very fine one, the moon shining brightly, when toward midnight the sleeping camp was aroused by some terrific shrieks. These were the cries of poor Reed, who, enveloped in his bedding and mosquito curtains, was being borne off by a crocodile.

It is said by those who knew him well and accompanied him on this and other previous trips that he had the habit of sleeping with his foot on the gunwale of the boat, and no doubt this afforded the crocodile an easier opportunity of seizing him.

The crocodile has a remarkable eye. It can arrange the pupil to a vertical or horizontal position at will to suit its requirement by day or night. It has a special natural protection to the eye, and through a duct escapes the fluid when the monster weeps. In fact, he is a peculiar brute altogether, with many special gifts besides his huge jaws that help to make of him the terror he is.—Sydney Mail.

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